



ANOTHER SIDE OF THE DRAFT

Who'll go first?

That question probably will be debated right up to the morning of the first day of the NFL Draft on April 28.

All the "tangibles" and "intangibles" have been measured. But the **JA MARCUS RUSSELLs** and **BRADY QUINN**s and **CALVIN JOHNSON**s of the world all have something else going for them – interesting off-the-field stories. Indeed, all of the players who'll be chosen at New York City's Radio City Music Hall on Saturday and Sunday, April 28-29 have them.

Following are some of the interesting notes on the class of '07:

THERE'S ALWAYS ROOM FOR FATS! He is in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame for such hits as "Blueberry Hill" and "Ain't That A Shame." But in September 2005, **FATS DOMINO** was no different than thousands of other citizens of New Orleans – displaced by Hurricane Katrina.

Domino, his wife **ROSEMARY** and their two daughters stayed in their home in the city's low-lying 9th Ward for as long as they could before they had to be evacuated by rowboat. They were taken to a shelter in Baton Rouge – at which point they were picked up by LSU quarterback **JA MARCUS RUSSELL**. The tie-in? The family of Russell's girlfriend was friends with Domino's family. Fats and family joined the 15 other refugees already in Russell's two-room apartment. "Fats just stayed at my apartment, rested, and watched the news," says Russell. "I had people sleeping on the floor, the couch, everywhere. It was pretty crazy."

And it will never be forgotten by Fats Domino. "Without JaMarcus, it would have been even worse," he says.

EXCELLING ACADEMICALLY: The draft class of '07 includes many players who have made the term "student-athlete" ring true.

Many of the players who will be selected for the NFL have either already received their degrees or will graduate this spring.

One is Notre Dame quarterback **BRADY QUINN**, who graduated in December with a double major in finance and political science. Quinn insisted on the double major at the academically difficult Notre Dame.

"I actually tried to talk him out of it," says **JOSHUA KAPLAN**, Quinn's adviser in the school's political science department. "But from early on, it was clear that it was important for him to do it. It's clear to me he came to Notre Dame because he wanted the real experience, and that includes the education."

Ten draft-eligible players with high marks:

GOOD GRADES

Player	School	Major
DE Gaines Adams	Clemson	Graduated with degree in sports management.
QB John Beck	BYU	Graduated with degree in communications.
LB Stewart Bradley	Nebraska	Graduated with degree in accounting/finance.
T James Marten	Boston College	Graduated with degree in finance and marketing.
DT Amobi Okoye	Louisville	Graduated with degree in psychology.
LB Paul Posluszny	Penn State	Graduated with degree in finance.
QB Brady Quinn	Notre Dame	Graduated with degree in finance and political science.
LB Juwan Simpson	Alabama	Graduated with degree in criminal justice.
QB Troy Smith	Ohio State	Graduated with degree in communications.
G Kasey Studdard	Texas	Graduated with degree in liberal arts.

SOME SUMMER JOB: No cushy, air-conditioned summer jobs for **CALVIN JOHNSON**.

The Georgia Tech wide receiver, who started as a building-construction major but switched to management – spent last summer building dry latrine systems intended for the poor of South America. “I felt like I could help somebody out,” he says.

That he did. Johnson became part of a joint venture between the Georgia Tech Research Institute and Emory University that put Tech’s engineering expertise to work fighting disease in developing nations. Johnson and another student worked with **KEVIN CARAVATI**, a senior research scientist at the Tech Research Institute, to design a system that could help people living on less than a dollar a day in areas with no running water. The two prototypes they developed using bicycle tubes for gaskets and scrap wood for the structure is so innovative, it could be patented and Johnson’s name would be one of the ones on it.

“What impressed me most was his dedication to this,” says Caravati.

OKOYE’S A YOUNG ’UN!: In grammar school at two. In high school by 12. In college by 16.

That is the amazing educational progression of 19-year-old Louisville defensive tackle **AMOBİ OKOYE**, who on draft day and in the season stands to become the youngest NFL player in two categories.

Born in Nigeria – and no relation to the Kansas City Chiefs’ second-leading career rusher **CHRISTIAN OKOYE** – Okoye accompanied his mother, a school principal, to school and at 2 1/2 sat in the first grade, learning to read.

“I really never felt younger than anybody else,” says Amobi. “I always felt I was in the right grade. I guess that’s thanks to my parents.”

At 19 years old on the first day of the draft (April 28), Okoye can become the youngest first-round draft choice since 1967, the first year of the common draft between the AFL and NFL. And on Kickoff Sunday (September 9), if Okoye appears in a game, he will become the youngest NFL player since ’67. The top five in each category (since 1967):

YOUNGEST FIRST-ROUND DRAFT PICKS			YOUNGEST TO PLAY IN AN NFL GAME		
Player	Season	Years/Days	Player	Season	Years/Days
DT Amobi Okoye	2007	19/322	DT Amobi Okoye	2007	20/91
LB Jamir Miller, Ariz.	1994	20/156	T Jamie Nails, Buff.	1997	20/110
CB DeAngelo Hall, Atl.	2004	20/157	DT Randy Starks, Tenn.	2004	20/272
WR Reidel Anthony, TB	1997	20/181	TE Jean Fugett, Dallas	1972	20/276
RB Walter Payton, Chi.	1975	20/187	RB David Nelson, Minn.	1984	20/284
T Bob Whitfield, Atl.	1992	20/191	DE Marc Spindler, Det.	1990	20/285

HEY, COACH, WHERE SHOULD I GO?: There was Clemson defensive end **GAINES ADAMS** when he was in high school in Greenwood, South Carolina – where he graduated in a class of 12 -- playing eight-man football and wondering if he would ever get the chance to play in college.

And there was his coach, former South Carolina quarterback **STEVE TANEYHILL** -- one of Clemson’s most-hated rivals – recommending him to...Clemson. The rest is history, as Adams became only the second Tiger since the school starting playing football in 1896 to earn unanimous first-team All-America honors.

“There’s pretty good hatred between the two schools in this state, so it’s not very common for a South Carolina graduate to be calling about a prospect like Steve did,” says Clemson coach **TOMMY BOWDEN**.

Adams even sent Taneyhill a Tiger sweatshirt, which he occasionally wears. “I thought Gaines made the right decision (with his choice of colleges),” Taneyhill says. “Even though it’s Clemson.”

FROM TEXAS TO OKLAHOMA: It shocked every football fan in Texas when Oklahoma running back **ADRIAN PETERSON**, from Palestine, Texas, chose to play for the Sooners rather than the Texas Longhorns.

On top of that, in Peterson’s first game against Texas – the big-time rivals play every year in the Cotton Bowl in Dallas, roughly halfway between the schools – the Sooners won for the fifth consecutive time and he rushed for 225 yards.

So leave it to a judge to have the final word on the shock of losing a homestate product to a hated rival. “It’s like your wife running off with **BRAD PITT**,” said Judge **BASCOM W. BENTLEY III** of Texas’ 369th District Court. “You understand it, but it still hurts.”

KAHUKU TO LEAD THE NFL THIS YEAR?: Hawaii is home to the NFL's annual Pro Bowl. Last season, it also became home to one of five U.S. high schools with the most graduates on NFL Kickoff rosters – five players each.

Kahuku High School, 26 miles north of Honolulu and called the “Pride of the North Shore” -- made the list for the first time, and Utah tackle **TAVO TUPOLA** thinks he can add to that total this year.

“Making an NFL team tells our kids they can overcome the odds coming from a small community,” says Kahuku coach **REGGIE TORRES**.

Tupola – now 6-4, 300 pounds -- played defensive back at Kahuku. “I consider it a blessing that I played DB in high school,” he says. “I use that footwork as an offensive lineman, backpedaling and shifting from one spot to another.” After graduating in December with a degree in sociology, Tupola hopes to add to the Red Raiders' NFL list. Kahuku High grads in the NFL:

RED RAIDERS IN THE NFL

Player	NFL Team	Kahuku Grad
S Aaron Francisco	Arizona	2001
G Chris Kemoeatu	Pittsburgh	2001
DT Maake Kemoeatu	Carolina	1998
TE Itula Mili	Free Agent	1994
G Chris Naeole	Jacksonville	1993

HEY, BRO!: For **PARKER SANTOS**, this is nothing unusual.

The six-year-old already has uncle **CARSON PALMER** playing quarterback for the Cincinnati Bengals. Now another of Parker's uncles – Texas-El Paso quarterback **JORDAN PALMER** – may be joining brother Carson in the NFL.

The Palmers can add to a somewhat exclusive NFL QB fraternity. There are three sets of quarterback brothers active in the league – the **HASSELBECKs** (Matt, Seattle; Tim, NY Giants), **MANNINGs** (Eli, NY Giants; Peyton, Indianapolis) and **MC COWNs** (Josh, Detroit; Luke, Tampa Bay).

Jordan Palmer can make it a brother QB quartet. Exactly what Parker Santos might expect.

“He thinks that everybody's uncle plays football,” laughs Danna Palmer, Jordan and Carson's mother.

THE CORN IS OK!: He came from Chicago. What did he know about corn?

And when Northern Illinois running back **GARRETT WOLFE** drove the 60 miles to DeKalb, Illinois to first visit the school, he just about cried. All he saw were cornfields, some with stalks that seemed taller than him (5-7). “I originally thought, no way will I ever go here,” says Wolfe.

Fast forward four years, and Wolfe had set the school career rushing record (5,136 yards, topping the mark of **MICHAEL TURNER** [4,941], now of the San Diego Chargers). And, well, the corn became normal.

Why not? Northern Illinois kicks off the DeKalb Corn Festival, held at the end of every August to celebrate the harvest and the school year. Ten thousand ears of sweet corn are given away. The players get their fill, indeed. Even their city RB.

“I actually think I'd like to live out here someday,” says Wolfe. “The corn is all right.”

DRAFT-NIKS: **OHIO STATE QB TROY SMITH**, the 2006 Heisman Trophy winner, and his roommate, Buckeyes **WR TED GINN**, first met in Sunday school as seven-year-olds in Cleveland.....**BYU TE JONNY HARLINE**, who grew up in Orem, Utah, performed his two-year Mormon mission in New York City, where he fell in love with Spanish Harlem. “I met a lot of interesting people and had some great experiences there,” he says. “There's always something going on. I've been back to visit a couple of times.”.....**PITTSBURGH QB TYLER PALKO** has been diagramming plays since he was nine years old. Tyler learned by watching his father **BOB**, a high school coach in Pennsylvania. “When you're around your dad and all he does centers around football, you're going to do what he does,” says Tyler. “I drew 11 guys on the field and put it all together.”.....**ONCE A YEAR** for the past four seasons, the townspeople of Amsterdam, New York rented a bus to travel to Boston to see hometown success **JOSH BEEKMAN** play at guard-center for Boston College. “The bus was always full,” says Beekman's high school coach **PAT LIVERIO**.....**THINK MICHIGAN CB LEON HALL** isn't romantic? He proposed to fiancée **JESSICA COBB** on Valentine's Day.....**NOTRE DAME OL BOB MORTON** lost his father this year before the season's first game. Before every game, he dialed his father's cell phone just to hear his dad's voice. His mother paid \$9-a-month extra so Bob could listen to his father.